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SENSITIVE
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DEPT FOR S/WGI AND EUR/SCE (PETERSON)

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KWMN](#) [KPAO](#) [SR](#)
SUBJECT: SERBIA: NOMINEE FOR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN OF COURAGE AWARD

REF: A) STATE 111471; B) BELGRADE 1080

¶1. (SBU) Embassy Belgrade would like to nominate Majda Puaca for the Secretary's Award for International Women of Courage (Ref A). An interagency group at post met to consider nominees and unanimously endorsed Puaca's nomination. Post informed Ms. Puaca of its intentions, and she would enthusiastically accept the award, if selected.

Justification

¶2. (SBU) As one of the co-organizers of the ill-fated Pride Parade, banned by the government at the last minute in September (Ref B), Majda Puaca demonstrated personal fortitude and leadership in the face of open threats by nationalist groups and overwhelming societal disapproval. A prominent member and advocate for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community, Puaca led efforts to demand equal rights for women and men of alternative sexual orientation. Mindful of the powerful symbolism associated with Pride events, she refused to compromise her principles when pressured by the police and the government to move the parade from downtown to a suburban park.

¶3. (SBU) Operating in a conservative society in which parliamentarians have called homosexuality a sickness akin to kleptomania and church representatives have declared the event a precursor to Sodom and Gomorrah, Puaca and her colleagues succeeded, despite the parade's cancellation, in sparking a broader debate about the rights of minority groups and the role of the state in defending these rights. At considerable personal risk, she willingly swam against the currents of public opinion in a country in which the previous attempt to organize a Pride Parade ended in bloodshed in 2001
(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ppXVAocEHsk>).

¶4. (SBU) Due to her role as the public face of the Pride Parade, right-wing and nationalist groups targeted Puaca, including by posting her home address on the Internet. Puaca, who also is active in the feminist movement through the NGO "Women at Work," told us on November 18 that she continues to be confronted online and on the streets virtually on a daily basis. These incidents fortunately have not gone further than verbal attacks, and Puaca remains undeterred. Calling the past six months, during which she and her colleagues frequently worked 15-17 hour days, "a life-changing experience," Puaca is all the more determined to ensure that the Pride Parade finally occurs in 2010 so that the women and men of the LGBT community can exercise their right to equality. The selection committee can find more on Puaca at the

following BBC site: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8263116.stm>

Personal Data

Full legal name: Majda Puaca

Job Title: Financial administrator for the NGO Women at Work

D/POB: 12/09/1979, Belgrade, Serbia

Citizenship: Serbian

Address, Telephone, and E-Mail: Drinciceva 2, Belgrade, Serbia,
381-64-180-6964, supermajda@gmail.com

Passport Number: 007057752

Languages: fluent in English, basic knowledge of French and German

15. (U) Post contact is Political Officer Eric Collings,
CollingsEM@state.gov, 381-11-306-4686.
BRUSH